THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) The Indian Coast Guard is entrusted with responsibility of maintaining round the clock surveillance in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone and monitoring the operations of all the fishing vessels beyond the Territorial Waters of India. Therefore, protecting our fishermen and guiding them in the areas near the borders of other countries is an important task that is included in the Charter of Duties of the Indian Coast Guard.

Indian fishermen are regularly advised to keep clear of the International Maritime Boundary Line by at least five nautical miles, to avoid interception and apprehension by the security forces of other countries. Community Interaction Programmes are also organized at frequent intervals along the coastal villages of our country where Coast Guard personnel educate our fishermen community not to cross the international Maritime Boundary Line.

Differentiation between operation VIJAY and post-operation VIJAY casualties

3077. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has drawn distinction between operation VIJAY and post operation VIJAY casualties thus diluting the benefits being extended by Government to the widows/NOKs of post operation VIJAY Battle casualties; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to remove this anomaly which is not only against the natural justice, but also has adversely affected the morale and motivation of soldiers, their families and NOKs of martyrs?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) A distinction has been made by the Government between casualties in war and those arising out of border skirmishes and action against militants/terrorists/extremists etc., owing to the different levels of risk, the intensity of action involved in each case and also in the interest of the morale of the Armed Forces personnel.

According to this policy, Operation Vijay was treated as a war-like engagement and a special welfare package including enhanced ex-gratia compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs to the Next of Kin of the Battle casualties was provided. However, no distinction has been made between Operation Vijay and post-Operation Vijay casualties, in so far as the pensionary benefits are concerned. All war widows would be entitled to liberalized family pension.

Conferring war widow status to widow of soldiers who died before 1st January, 1999

3078. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the widows of soldiers who sacrificed their lives during various operations before 1st January, 1999 are not being given the status of war widows; and

(b) what steps Government propose to take to remove the disparity and give status of War Widow to the widows of those died before 1st January, 1999?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) No, Sir. When a soldier dies in any operation, there is a system of declaring him as a battle casualty as per the prescribed procedure. Widows of such battle casualties are commonly known as war widows.

(b) Various benefits are given to the war widows/next of kin of the battle casualties depending on the nature of operations.

Submarine deal with France

3079. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed a US$ 1.8 billion submarine deal with France recently to acquire six submarines to replace to "fast decommissioning" of India's fleet;